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## THE WAR AGAINST HUMANITY: TECHNOLOGY, CAPITAL, APOCALYPSE

MASHINES APOCALYPTIC, CAPITAL, CAPITALISM, CATAclysm, TECHNOLOGY

In *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* Karl Marx would ask: (1) What in the evolution of mankind is the meaning of this reduction of the greater part of mankind to abstract labor? (2) What are the mistakes committed by the piecemeal reformers, who either want to raise wages and in this way to improve the situation of the working class, or regard equality of wages (as Proudhon does) the goal of social revolution?

In political economy labor occurs only in the form of wage earning activity. But political economy knows the worker only as a working — as a beast reduced to the strictest bodily needs. Quoting Proudhon Marx will show that the goal of work is to eliminate labour time and replace it with free time:

"To develop in greater spiritual freedom, a people must break their bondage to their bodily needs—they must cease to be the slaves of the body. They must, therefore, above all, have time at their disposal for spiritual creative activity and spiritual enjoyment."

Noticing the discrepancy between the ideal and the actuality of work, automation, and time Proudhon would remark: "Consideration has not been given . . . to this big distinction as to how far men work through machines or as machines." Of course Proudhon in his Utopian vision thought that automation would bring about the elimination of work and the introduction of free time: "In the future life of the peoples, however, the inanimate forces of nature working in machines will be our slaves and servants."

What we've begun to notice in our time of the Automatic Society is just the opposite, that it is people who are becoming slaves and servants of the machines. And as our automated society takes on more and more of the unique powers of the human (i.e., intelligence skills) it will exclude the worker from his work (i.e., the knowledge worker from his knowledge) and make of him surplus labor (i.e., expendable and superfluous, disposable).

And as Marx repeatedly suggested "surplus labor will die". (EPM: 27)

Under the old Factory System of the Industrial Era as Marx quoting Proudhon would suggest it was easier for the capitalist to

"appropriate the energies of the lower classes down to the children, to be employed and used up instead of mechanical aids." (EPM: 31) To this day in many Third World countries the sweat shop factories still enacts this form of slave labour. When Proudhon describes this he says, "Such an economic order condemns men to occupations so mean, to a degradation so devastating and bitter, that by comparison savagery seems like a kingly condition." (EPM: 31)

In answer the first question of abstract labor Marx tells us:

Political economy considers labor in the abstract as a thing; "labor is a commodity." If the price is high, then the commodity is in great demand; if the price is low, then the commodity is in great supply, "the price of labor as a commodity must fall lower and lower." This is made inevitable partly by the competition between capitalist and worker, and partly by the competition among the workers. Proudhon will comment: "The working population, the seller of labor, is necessarily reduced to accepting the meagerest part of the product. . . . Is the theory of labor as a commodity anything other than a theory of disguised bondage?" (EPM: 33)

In fact, Marx quoting Proudhon again says, "The capitalist is always free to use labor, and the worker is always forced to sell it. The value of labor is completely destroyed if it is not sold every instant. Labor can neither be accumulated nor even be saved, unlike true commodities. Labor is life, and if life is not each day exchanged for food, it suffers and soon perishes. To claim that human life is a commodity, one must, therefore, admit slavery." (EPM: 33)

Marx commenting on Proudhon will say,

If, then, labor is a commodity, it is a commodity with the most unfortunate attributes. But even by the principles of political economy it is no commodity, for it is not the free result of a free transaction. The present economic regime simultaneously lowers the price and the remuneration of labor; it perfects the worker and degrades the man. "Industry has become a war, and commerce a gamble." (EPM: 33)

He continues: "Up to the present, industry has been in a state of war— a war of conquest: "It has squandered the lives of the men who made up its army with the same indifference as the great conquerors. Its aim was the possession of wealth, not the happiness of men." (EPM: 33) Instead as Marx quoting Proudhon again emphasizes: "It is in the conflict of opposed forces that science seeks order and equilibrium: perpetual war, according to it, is the sole means of obtaining peace; that war is called competition." (EPM: 33)

Rereading an essay by Leo Daugherty *Gravers False and True: Blood Meridian as Gnostic Tragedy* on Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* this notion of the Heraclitean cosmos of War resurfaced in that unique book's Gnostic vision of life in our anaretic kenosis (i.e., a cosmos emptied of the divine, a realm of pure death):

In one of the passages most crucial to an adequate understanding of *Blood Meridian*, he tells David Brown, "Every child knows that play is nobler than work," that "Men are born for games" and that "all games aspire to the condition of war for here that which is wagered swallows up game, player, all" (249). We are reminded here of the novel's epigraph from Jacob Boehme: "It is not to be thought that the life of darkness is sunk in misery and lost as if in sorrowing. There is no sorrowing. For sorrow is a thing that is swallowed up in death, and death and dying are the very life of the darkness." Indeed, war is the ultimate cause of unity, involving as it does the "testing of one's will and the will of another within that larger will [i.e., war itself] which because it binds them is therefore forced to select. War is the ultimate game because war is at last a forcing of the unity of existence. War is god" (249).<sup>1</sup>

In this sense Capital is War, is a god, an intelligence whose goal is not the happiness of men, but rather the optimization and emergence of machinic civilization is central to this underlying conflict one sees in Marx's diagnosis of man, machine, and political economy. In such a world as Daugherty reminds us: "Ultimately, a person serves the god of war, as Holden tells Tobin, in order to be "no god server but a god himself" (250)". So that at the core of capitalism is this engine of creation: a creation of machinic gods.

Steven Shaviro in a complementary essay in that same collection "The Very Life of the Darkness": A Reading of *Blood Meridian* comments (and I quote at length):

The judge states categorically that "[a] ritual includes the letting of blood. Rituals which fail in this requirement are but mock rituals" (329). All the devastations chronicled in *Blood Meridian* occur in a ritual space and time, an Outside that helps to enforce, yet stands apart from, the social bond: "Here beyond men's judgements all covenants were brittle" (106). Glanton and his men exist only to disrupt the orderly procedures of production, conservation and trade; they "carried no tantamount goods and the disposition to *exchange* was foreign to them" (121). They ravage the very order upon which they parasitically feed. Their actions all fall under the rubric of what Georges Bataille calls *nonproductive expenditure*: prodigality, play, waste, recklessness, empty display and unmotivated violence. Beneath the mask of a Darwinian struggle for survival, or a Hobbesian war of all against all, or even a lust for wealth and power and honor, they sumptuously, gratuitously squander their own lives together, of course, with those of many others at every turn. They have no spirit of seriousness or of enterprise; they unwittingly pursue self-ruin rather than advantage. All these men and not just the kid are childlike in their unconsciousness, or indifference, as to motivations and consequences. According to the judge, "*Men are born for games. Nothing else. Every child knows that play is nobler than work. He knows too that the worth or merit of a game is not inherent in the game itself but rather in the value of that which is put at hazard. [A]ll games aspire to the condition of war*" (249). Glanton and his men give themselves over to the game of war

wholeheartedly, playing without taking care to preserve their stakes. Their lack of awareness is more than a match for the judge's extreme lucidity, if it is a question of reaching the point where "that which is wagered swallows up game, player, all" (249). For the clash and testing of wills in which the judge exults must end, not in the victory of one, but in the sacrificial consumption of everyone and everything. And such is finally our inmost, most secret and most horrific desire. [emphasis mine]

This desire for self-annihilation, an apocalypse of total war is at the heart of capitalist society and culture. A thanatropic drive to bring about the end-game of civilization itself, and in the process embark on a final apocalypse – from Church Latin *apocalypsis* "revelation," from Greek *apokalyptein* "uncover, disclose, reveal" – which will reveal and disclose the inhuman core of capitalist war: the absolute intelligence of the mechanosphere.

Steven Shaviro on his blog *The Pinocchio Theory* would speak of Nick Land's *Accelerationist* theoretic (see: More on Accelerationism),

Deleuze and Guattari's reconceptualization of capitalism was of course picked up in the 1990s by the British philosopher Nick Land. Land pushes the deterritorializing schizophrenia of D & G to the maximum, while dropping the anti-capitalist rhetoric. Instead, Land celebrates absolute deterritorialization as liberation, to the point of total disintegration and death. He sees Capital as an alien force that exceeds and ruptures the human; but he celebrates this destructive force (whereas Marxists denounce it; and defenders of capitalism deny that such is the case).

Land offers a science-fictional view of capitalism. But he identifies with Capital itself – against human beings, or any other sort of organic life. This picks up the monstrosity of Capital as body without organs or socius. But do we need therefore to identify with it, against ourselves? Land develops a kind of Stockholm Syndrome with regard to capital. Contrast the way Hardt and Negri try to reclaim the multitude as a monstrosity that the ruling order has always tried to repress. But they are wrong and Land is right; it is really Capital that is excessive and monstrous. Of course, we cannot remain the same and deal with this monstrosity. In order to survive the monstrosity of capital, let alone flourish under it or despite it, we need to change. This is where we become posthuman.

This sense that to combat the inevitable monstrosity that Capital is we – if we *humans* or *posthumans* – are to survive and thrive then we will "need to change" to become in ourselves *monstrous*.

This feeds into Judge Holden's remark in a debate with a Tennessee man in *Blood Meridian* wherein as Daughtery reminds us the judge makes the familiar argument that many people in many cultures intuitively know that accurate portraiture "chain[s] the man to his own likeness," thus weakening him and perhaps killing him. The judge himself obsessively draws likenesses from nature, he says, in order to "expunge them from the memory of man." Webster counters that "no man can put all the world in a book," no matter what his goals for trying to do so might be "No more than everything drawn in a book is so." "My book or some other book," answers the judge: "Whether in my book or not, every man is tabernacled in every other and he in exchange and so on in an endless complexity of being and witness to the uttermost edge of the world" (14041). The word to notice here is exchange. The judge refuses to be tabernacled in any other man. He refuses to be part of the exchange system. (see above)

The 'exchange system' he is talking of is capitalism. The sense that the Judge is the God of War, the one who remains Outside Law and Covenant, the one who refuses to play the game of Capital is because he is the engine or intelligence of Capital itself. In another essay by Ian Alexander Moore: *Heraclitus and the Metaphysics of War in Blood Meridian* forthcoming in *Philosophical Approaches to Cormac McCarthy: Beyond Reckoning*, ed. Chris Eagle (London: Routledge, 2016), he will again reiterate that this novel "is a novel of war, of violence everlasting and immanence without redemption. For all that, it is not nihilistic." Instead in Moore's view McCarthy is immersed in the ancient dualisms of Asia Minor, following Heraclitus who would sponsor a philosophy of fire, and the holiness of war much in the vein of the eternal wars between Ahura Mazda (Good Intelligence) vs. Angra Mainyu (Evil Intelligence). Moore will find in McCarthy's notes for the judge's disquisition on war ... "one finds the following, typed out by McCarthy himself: War is the father of us all and out [sic] king. War discloses who is godlike and who is but a man, who is a slave and who is a free man." (Moore, 1) Quoting the Judge from the novel Moore discovers this (quoted above, too!): "war is the truest form of divination. It is the testing of one's will and the will of another within that larger will which because it binds them is therefore forced to select. War is the ultimate game because war is at last a forcing of the unity of existence. War is god (261)." In the final analysis of this Heraclitean vision of fire and war and apocalypse Moore finds for Judge that "war is the governing principle of the universe, and if we are to live meaningfully and authentically, we must endeavor to correspond to it through our own acts of war. All other options—mercy, conventional morality, hope for redemption or transcendence—prove vacuous in the world of *Blood Meridian*, as the kid's failures demonstrate." (Moore, 10)

In a 1992 interview with *Der Spiegel*, McCarthy does express concern for modernity's loss of meaning: "We are like primitive tribes," he says, "who have been driven from their culture and have lost their orientation, their identity, their capacity to live." (Moore, 9) And in an interview with *The New York Times* from the same year, McCarthy suggests that this lack of meaning and even of freedom may stem from the dishonoring of war:

There's no such thing as life without bloodshed [...] I think the notion that the species can be improved in some way, that everyone could live in harmony, is a really dangerous idea. Those who are afflicted with this notion are the first ones to give up their souls, their freedom. Your desire that it be that way will enslave you and make your life *vacuous*. (Moore, 10)

As Marx would remark in his 1844 Manuscripts: "We have seen how, to it, exchange itself appears to be a fortuitous fact. The only wheels which political economy sets in motion are *avarice* and the war among the *avaricious*—competition." (Marx, 70) In fact, in his uncovering of capitalism even in its early stages in the Mercantile System as Marx remarks,

The avaricious character of trade was to some extent already beginning to be hidden. The nations drew slightly nearer to one another, concluded trade and friendship agreements, did business with one another and, for the sake of larger profits, treated one another with all possible love and kindness. But basically there was still the old rage for money and selfishness which from time to time erupted in wars, which in that day were all based on trade jealousy. In these wars it also became evident that trade, like robbery, is based on the law of the strong hand. No scruples whatever were felt about exacting by cunning or violence such treaties as were held to be the most advantageous. (Marx, 172)

What was true then is even more true now in our so called World Trade and its impersonal agreements and organizations. Some have seen in recent years the rise of new world at war. Some see the Great Powers of the West in crisis, while a new coalition of Eurasian powers is consolidating its linkages and networks. As Zbigniew Brzezinski a well known policy analyst recently said in a memo to the Obama Administration:

Potentially the most dangerous scenario would be a grand coalition of China, Russia and perhaps Iran, an 'anti-hegemonic' coalition, united not by ideology but by complementary grievances. . . . Averting this contingency . . . will require a display of US geostrategic skill on the western, eastern and southern perimeters of Eurasia simultaneously.<sup>2</sup>

The controversial Russian political philosopher Alexander Dugin has also seen this geopolitical need to enforce a vision of Eurasian politics. In a recent work he tells us "Russian geopolitics is by definition the geopolitics of the Heartland; land-based geopolitics, the geopolitics of Land."<sup>3</sup> Dugin like Brzezinski seeks a new formation to counter the West or as he'll term it Oceanic Civilization with one of the Land, the Heartlands:

The Eurasian civilization, established around the Heartland with its core in the Russian *narod*, is much broader than contemporary Russia. To some degree, practically all the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) belong to it. Onto this sociological peculiarity, a strategic factor is superimposed: to guarantee its territorial security, Russia must take military control over the center of the zones attached to it, in the south and the west, and in the sphere of the northern Arctic Ocean. Moreover, if we consider Russia — a planetary *tellurocratic* pole, then it becomes apparent that its direct interests extend throughout the Earth and touch all the continents, seas, and oceans. Hence, it becomes necessary to elaborate a global geopolitical strategy for Russia, describing in detail the specific interests relating to each country and each region.<sup>4</sup>

This notion of *Tellurocracy* or Land based systems of governance are at the heart of Dugin's diagnosis: "Historically, Russians did not immediately realize the significance of their location and only accepted the baton of tellurocracy after the Mongolian conquests of Ghengis Khan, whose empire was a model of tellurocracy. But, beginning from the fifteenth century, Russia steadily and sequentially moved toward taking on the characteristics of the Heartland, which gradually led to the identification of Russian society with the civilization of Land, or *tellurocracy*." (ibid. KL 174) So that those who have owned the oceans are part of the formation of an Oceanic Empire or *thalassocracy*:

It is at Versailles, at the prompting of a group of American experts and big bankers who attended from the USA, that the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) was formed under the leadership of the American geopolitician Isaiah Bowman, destined to become the most important authority in the formation of American foreign policy on a global scale in the *thalassocratic* spirit. The systematic establishment of a school of American geopolitics began precisely at this crucial moment. At the same time, Halford Mackinder, who was present in the British delegation at the conclusion of the Versailles Treaty, also began to cooperate with the CFR. Later, Mackinder would publish his works on policy in an influential journal published by the CFR, Foreign Affairs. Thus the foundation was laid for a systematized geopolitical Atlanticism, based on the strategic unity of the two great Anglo-Saxon states, England and the USA. And if the USA played a subordinate role at Versailles, then the balance of power would slowly shift in its favor, and the USA would gradually come to the forefront, taking upon itself the function of the bulwark of the whole marine civilization, and becoming the core of sea power and a global oceanic thalassocratic empire. (ibid., KL 563)

For Dugin then the 21st Century will encompass the war of two forces: the Thalassocratic Empires of Atlantis vs. the Telluric Empire of the Heartlands of Eurasia. In such imaginings we see the ancient dualisms being reenacted or staged, a confrontation of Good vs. Evil, etc. A Gnostic vision that will entail a complete and apocalyptic all out war for the future.

Fantasies like this pervade the political spectrum on many fronts, I used Brzezinski's and Dugin's war visions only to show that such thought is in the atmosphere of our current world leaders, who of late have reemerged within the antagonistic cultures of radical extremism and ultra-right wing ideologies, religious fervor, and cult like followings with apocalyptic and fascist impulses and tendencies. Our world seems primed and ready for violence, for new forms of apocalypticisms, for war.

As Luciano Pellicani tells us in *Revolutionary Apocalypse: Ideological Roots of Terrorism* of the revolutionary spirit and those who enact it,

The professional revolutionary's goal is the creation of an evangelical community, based on equality and planetary brotherhood. To do this, he is prepared to wage a war of destruction against those who have surrendered to mammon and allowed the

domination of the law of universal trade that all-profanes and all-degrades. Hence, the destructive calling of gnostic revolution: not a single stone of the corrupt and corrupting world shall remain standing; hence, also, the inevitable destructive and self-destroying outcome of the revolutionary project to purify the existing through a policy of mass terror and annihilation.<sup>5</sup>

This sense that a new puritanical vision is arising, one seek like Heraclitus fire and apocalypse, destruction and annihilation. We discover this in such thinkers of recent vintage as Andrew Culp – influenced by a darker vision of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies. Culp will speak of the coming destruction of the world as cataclysm:

The cataclysm is not an end but a new beginning, the cataclysm of a temporary hell, "itself the effect of an elementary injustice" that sweeps in and out, rather than being an abysmal lake of sulfur where souls burn forever. It is the apocalypse before its decadent transformation into the system of Judgment. Only a revival of this cataclysmic event can end the apocalypse of an "already industrialized organization" that appeared "a Metropolis" by way of "the great military, police, and civil security of a new State" with a "programmed self-glorification" complemented by a "demented installation of an ultimate judiciary and moral power" (44, 46). We know from Nietzsche's *Gay Science* that the impending cataclysm of "breakdown, destruction, ruin" may appear gloomy (279). And it will certainly cover the earth in a blackness darker than the world has ever seen (279). Yet we should greet it with cheer. For the cataclysm brings with it a new dawn worthy of our highest expectations. Though the daybreak may not be bright, we will have escaped the judgment of God, Man, and the World. "At long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger," because "the sea, our sea, lie open again" . . . "perhaps there has never yet been such an 'open sea'" (280).<sup>6</sup>

Strange and eerie that in Culp, an antagonist of the West chooses to complete his vision of cataclysm and apocalypse with a vision of the Open Sea, a new *thalassocratic* vision of an almost utopian and Atlantaenism. We all remember Plato's description of that ancient Sea Kingdom, Atlantis:

This power came forth out of the Atlantic Ocean, for in those days the Atlantic was navigable; and there was an island situated in front of the straits which are by you called the Pillars of Heracles; the island was larger than Libya and Asia put together, and was the way to other islands, and from these you might pass to the whole of the opposite continent which surrounded the true ocean; for this sea which is within the Straits of Heracles is only a harbour, having a narrow entrance, but that other is a real sea, and the surrounding land may be most truly called a boundless continent. Now in this island of Atlantis there was a great and wonderful empire which had rule over the whole island and several others, and over parts of the continent, and, furthermore, the men of Atlantis had subjected the parts of Libya within the columns of Heracles as far as Egypt, and of Europe as far as Tyrrhenia. *This vast power, gathered into one, endeavoured to subdue at a blow our country and yours and the whole of the region within the straits; and then, Solon, your country shone forth, in the excellence of her virtue and strength, among all mankind. She was pre-eminent in courage and military skill, and was the leader of the Hellenes. And when the rest fell off from her, being compelled to stand alone, after having undergone the very extremity of danger, she defeated and triumphed over the invaders, and preserved from slavery those who were not yet subjugated, and generously liberated all the rest of us who dwell within the pillars.* But afterwards there occurred violent earthquakes and floods; and in a single day and night of misfortune all your warlike men in a body sank into the earth, and the island of Atlantis in like manner disappeared in the depths of the sea. For which reason the sea in those parts is impassable and impenetrable, because there is a shoal of mud in the way; and this was caused by the subsidence of the island. <sup>7</sup> (Plato, *Timaeus/Critias*)

Here in this ancient philosophical tract once again is pitted the Sea power of a *thalassocracy* against the Athenian *tellurocracy*. It would be Marx that reminds us that,

Hegel says somewhere that great historic facts and personages recur twice. He forgot to add: "Once as tragedy, and again as farce." <sup>8</sup>

Facts and personages: the repetition of tragedy and farce. The tragedy is that there will be no winners, "nothing human will get out alive" (Land). The farce is that humanity is preparing for an all-out war of all-against-all when the true enemy is the machine, capitalism itself that is seeking through our demise to give birth to its own kingdom of the machine. The cunning intelligence of capitalism is to allow humans to exchange death for profit in an endless machine of exchange going nowhere: a timeless presentism of death, and death's kingdom under the rule of the Judge.

Georges Bataille once reminded his readers: "Doubtless, no one will say, that I desire to inaugurate new cycles of holocausts: I am merely conveying the meaning of ancient customs."<sup>9</sup> In his uncovering of the ancient visions of those dualists we term Gnostics Bataille would remark,

In essence, it is possible to single out as the leitmotiv of Gnosis the conception of matter as an active principle, possessing its autonomous eternal existence, which is that of the tenebrous depths (which are not the absence of light but the monstrous archons revealed by this absence), that of evil (which is not the absence of good, but a creative act). (OC, 1:152–7)

And, yet, as we've seen with the War God of McCarthy's gnosis who is the veritable incarnation of the alien one, the dark and monstrous archon of Death and Destruction of which Capital is the shadow form we must add this from Bataille, too:

But, the despotic and bestial obsession of the evil and lawless forces appears undeniable, in metaphysical speculation as well as in mythological nightmare. It is difficult to believe that taken as a whole Gnosis is not above all a testimony of a sinister love for

darkness, of a monstrous taste for the obscene and lawless archons. (OC, 1:201–4)

As if in agreement Cormac McCarthy in a passage from *The Crossing* let's a character speak of the darkness:

He said that it was not a matter of illusion or no illusion. He spoke of the broad dryland barrial and the river and the road and the mountains beyond and the blue sky over them as entertainments to keep the world at bay, the true and ageless world. He said that the light of the world was in men's eyes only for the world itself moved in eternal darkness and darkness was its true nature and true condition and that in this darkness it turned with perfect cohesion in all its parts but that there was naught to see. He said that the world was sentient to its core and secret and black beyond men's imagining and that its nature did not reside in what could be seen or not seen. (Perspectives, KL 9432)

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## META

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